Walking the Grid / Dancing the Spiral and Other Poems

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Author's Note on the *Poems*: The first three poems address poetry either directly or indirectly. "Corrida" envisions poetry as the transcendental equivalent of the bullfight, abounding in symbols of light and darkness, tragedy and triumph. The traje de luces is the dazzlingly brilliant suit of gold braid and sequins ("brilliant like the sun") worn by the bullfighter, or torero. "Winged words" probably needs no explanation. It's about the birth of poetry from a place of silent, creative darkness (such as a bird's nest inside a hollow tree trunk). The quetzal is a strikingly beautiful, iridescent green bird (with red belly) that sports an elegant, long tail. It is native to Central America. "Swimming Pool" likens poetry to both a refreshing dip in the wet and a dive into the transcendent. Swimming pool as a stand-in for the meditation hall. Painter David Hockney's swimming pools are distinguished by their signature splash. I have an affinity with members of the mineral realm, the world of stones. Apparently Pablo Neruda did as well. He wrote a book of poems (Piedras del cielo/Stones of the Sky) in praise of turquoise, amethyst, diamond, topaz and others. Hence, "Plume Agate," an ode in the style of Neruda. The remaining poems all have to do with experiences or inspirations encountered while on the journey.

CORRIDA

The bull set free
and charging cross-town towards the plaza

Force of the uncreate
unleashed from primal silence
against the brilliance
of the unwritten page

Poetry: dark gaze that illumines
death of language reborn
in a *traje de luces*

Language in a suit of lights

WINGED WORDS

for Octavio Paz and Jonathan Maslow

The word is to the poet
as the woodpecker's hole is
to the dazzling quetzal:

A nesting place
        in a hollow tree
Inhabitable space
        to be expanded
        and enlarged.

Til dreams of sun
and airy flight
soon stir the heavy darkness;
and sleeping words awaken
and sprout their spreading wings.

Each word unfolds
and flies—
        resonant
                charmed
                        sacred
wagging elegant tail plumes.

SWIMMING POOL

after David Hockney

Limpid stone of water
Rectangular instant
of cerulean
        geometry

Emerald cut of liquid sky
and echo
        of the blue
        resounding sea

Parenthesis of fluid azure

A dip
        into one's own
        reflection
A dive
        into infinity
Communion
        with splashing suns

PLUME AGATE

after Pablo Neruda

Polished
hard
and slippery-smooth
you feel like light
from the eyes of God.
Brighter than moonbeams
yet not quite solar
you exude a planetary
sweetness
of scintillating sound.

Your light is fresh
and true as the dawn.

Feather light
you are the incarnate touch
of Christ or Krishna
the fluttering rush
of angel wings.
Petrified pearl
of tapioca
coconut creme turned opal
you are light,
you are sweet,
you are love made stone.

AWAKE

I awoke one morning
already awake
before the awakening.

I mean
I was awake
inside, there
before the lights
came on, before
the curtains
were raised,
those eyelids.

And I was there,
present
        as if Adam
        as if God
on the first day
and poised to witness
(with what expectancy!)
the dawn
(my eyelids raise)
of creation: morning!

FULL MOON

On this night
The moon is almost
Too full
The humid air
Too full

In the fullness of deepest silence
I am swathed in moonbeams
I am bathed in glistening moondew

And on this night
My heart is almost
Too full
My loving heart
Too full.

NOCTURNE

This dark
This calm
This still
This night

This hush
This moon
This full
This star

This vast
This soar

This light
This love

YOGI

I wear a crown.
I am kin to the elements.
My gaze extends
to the four cardinal points.

I abide in the balance
and comprehend the universe.
I travel at will
without once leaving home.

I gather red roses
and surge with ocean tides;
I fly with eagles, feed deer,
and eat mangos.

Darkness and daylight
embrace on my doorstep.
I am everything everywhere.
Being is my name.

Blissful my nature,
all that is that I am.
Lord of Creation,
the Song of Light and Life,
Infinite Majesty is all
that I am.

Infinite Majesty
is all that there is.

HERALD ("SHIVA VISITATION")

He came to my door
and I was not fully awake

He came to my door
that morning
that night
with serpents round his waist
and moonbeams in his hand

It was not yet dawn
and he addressed me as "friend"
Was it a man
or a god
whose eyes cast light
like starshine
whose form standing there
loomed large as the night

I was not fully awake
but I could see his skin was blue

His skin was silvery blue as the moon
and his smile shone like starlight

It was hours before the dawn
and I was not fully awake
but his skin was surely blue
his smile was soft as starlight

And all around was a sound
like that of distant wind
blowing high among the treetops

THE BODY AND THE FLAME

The body sits.
It sits and has a thought.
Perhaps it's just the whisper
Of a thought.

Then the body settles down
And the mind is very still.
The mind experiences the trace,
The faint whisper of the thought.

And the thought disappears.

And from the seed of the trace of the thought
There sprouts a solitary flame.
A mere trace of a flame
But it's a flame.

And the body disappears.

The body disappears and there's a sound.
There's a sound like the trace of a word,
The word that is not there.
And there is light,
And there's a flame.

The body cannot be seen.
But on a faint level
Perhaps it can be heard.

And the flame grows.
It grows but does not burn.
It grows but does not consume.[1]
The flame cannot be seen.
But on a faint level
Perhaps it can be heard.

The flame rises like the wind.
It grows and encircles round the body.
(The body cannot be seen.)
The flame envelops it
And fashions round it a cocoon.

From the top of the cocoon
There sprouts a flame
And the flame leaps higher
Like a spout of tall water.
Like a tall, thin sword
The flame rises high into the air.

The flame rises high
From the body that cannot be seen.
(But perhaps it can be heard.)
And other lights, like butterflies,
Break free from their cocoon.

Perhaps they can be seen.
Perhaps you see their light.

Perhaps the body, light as a butterfly,
The body light,
And filled with light,

---

[1] This image of the flame draws from "Llama de amor viva" ("Flame of Living Love"), by John of the Cross, sixteenth-century Spanish mystic.

Breaks free from the cocoon
And lifts high, light,
And rises in the air
Like a flame.

The body that cannot be seen
Lifts free of its cocoon,
Rises high, lifts light.
The faintest trace of body disappears
And there is flame.

And the flame flies through the air
Like a sun.
Like a sun enclosing a thousand suns
The flame flies through the air.

The flame soars high.
It passes through the farthest ethers
And it shines like the sun.
Like a sun enclosing a thousand suns
It shines.

But it cannot be seen.
Not with these eyes can it be seen.
The flame cannot be seen.
Not the faintest trace of flame remains.
The flame has disappeared.

Perhaps it can be heard.

WALKING THE GRID / DANCING THE SPIRAL

It's about alignment

About being grounded in the Earth
and rooted in the grid

And dancing!

Spinning in the spiral
and whirling
in the arms of infinity

It's about turning

About getting bearings
and being oriented
turning to go inside
and once inside
turning to go out once more

It's about alignment
about coming back to equilibrium
to balance and to bliss
about coming back onto the Self

Subject and object
self and the world
        aligned
        holy
        unified

Knowing no edges
knowing infinity
    energy
    dynamism
    silence

It's about celebration
about celebrating the rift
that opens knowledge and experience
of infinite dynamism
together with silence
the joys of activity
and the boons of deepest rest
in one single
    simple
    complex
    Being

It's about orientation
about turning to the light
and basking in the light
and realizing that the light you've found
is the light that you are

It's about walking the grid
and spinning the spiral
about bringing silence and activity
into the grid
and transforming the grid
into a vibrant dancing spiral

You dive in
and drink deep

You orient yourself
and turn and take a dive
into waters of light
and warmest intimacy

And leave the grid
to take a dive
and begin turning the arms
of the inner cosmic spiral

You find the light
and dive deep
into the waters

into ripples of light
into undulating currents
the sweet undertow of bliss

waters of purest light

Diving deep
you experience no edges

You spiral into the depths
the rivers of light
the rivers of love

the Ocean of Being

And you know that you are
the Ocean of Bliss that you've stirred

You visit the waters
you turn and re-turn
to see deeply
and see clearly

You drink the waters
and stir them
then return to be free
while walking your path
your way along the grid

You turn to the light and walk eastward
you walk along the gridlines of your path
and feel them melt beneath your feet

You feel them melt and turn liquid
They flow and eventually disappear

You feel them turn into light
and you lose boundaries
become liquid
become light

Light streams out of your eyes
and spills from all your pores
and you are a beacon
a pillar of light

You become a radiant sun

You feel the vertical coalesce
with your flat and angular grid
you add a vertical spin
to your customary back and forth
your horizontal left and right

You lose your edges
and know the grace of curves
    the lure of circle
    the expansion of sphere
    the fullness of egg

You feel an outward rippling
and radiate from the center
expanding as a spiral

You radiate light as does the sun
and more than that
you become a constellation of stars
and more than that
you become the axis
round which a spiraling universe
silently turns

You become a Universe of Pure Being

You're sturdy Uluru
and hurtling Hale-Bopp too
a rock of stability
and agent of ceaseless change

And in grace
you are the wedding dance
of cranes

You are Knower and the Known
Lover and Beloved
Creator and Creation
Awake in one vibrant Wholeness

All joined in your infinite Knowing

All joined and lively in your Loving

Straight lines
are erased by the water
curved lines too
are dispersed into air
edges lost without a trace
swallowed up in luminosity

It's about dancing
about breathing in the cosmic breath
and letting cosmic dimensions
enlighten the mundane in you

The ecstatic small self dances in time
with the large and omnipotent
Self and Ruler of All
Together they're dancing steps
of *Rishi*
Devata
and *Chhandas*

You dive deep
and take a dive
and are transformed
into a dance of light
a dance of breath
the breath of cosmic being

Take a dive
and grace the universe
with your breath

With innocence transform the world

Drink deep
lose edges
edges gone without a trace
edges swallowed by a light effulgent

Sing your pond into a river
dance your river into the sea

And let the Earth be beautified
by the music of your grace

Unite the grid and the spiral
join diversity with universality
come alive—be a vibrant mandala
    infinite in action
    infinite in rest

Join the infinite walk
the dance that goes forever onward
ever-changing
and ever the same

With every step
point value of infinity
expansion of the universe
with every heartbeat
each pulse a step
in the march of evolution

Begin the dance of life
the precious dance of *Samhita*
the dance of integrated Wholeness
that goes on forever
uniting the spiral and the grid
merging unity and diversity

Join the cosmic dance
that begins with alignment
and proceeds layer upon layer
and expansion upon expansion
while you are plumbing the depths
and soaring the heights

Keep dancing day after day
until totality becomes fixed
and is owned as your daily routine

Become One with your Being
Infinite in your Love
marriage of silver to gold
in sleeping and awake
day in and day out
in saecula saeculorum

And you're the living birthright
of spiral and grid
the life foretold
by prophets and seers

Enlivening the grid
of orientation East and West
and turning North to South
is action to initiate Wholeness
is action to turn the spiral
and spin the silent wheel
of Wholeness on the move

It lifts life into the air
like a chariot of light
like a chariot of love
it gently lifts and turns

The levitating light
the spiraling light
the dynamic light
of silence blissful
and unbounded

The spiral that sustains
and moves you as you walk your grid
is ever-expanding
and eternal

That space so vast and infinite
the same empty space
that lifts the sun
and turns the galaxies of light
that same space
lifts you
it upholds and turns you
as you walk your daily grid

It's the junction point
between infinity and point
silence and dynamism
relative and Absolute

It's the marriage of grid and spiral

Walking the grid and riding the spiral
manifest relative and unmanifest Absolute
attuned as one together they turn
joyfully aligned

You turn the spiral
and spinning out on arms of the spiral
you spring out to the stars
and back in a single soma second
without ever leaving home

You dance among stars
and return to the beginning place
the place of your true being
awash now with starlight

While growing in light
and growing in bliss
you build peace within
and make peace with others

You make peace with the land
the waters and the air
peace with the universe and the gods

So dance the light of subjectivity
golden waves of consciousness

Dance the light of objectivity
silvery sheen of gold's reflection
Dance the dance of living wholeness
interwoven strands of gold and silver
uniting subject and object
in each breath that you draw

And as you breathe
you weave the mantle
of your cosmic being
and discover the Being
of your human mettle

And you find the love
concealed in things material
you see the lamp at the door
and find the blinding light of life
the value of inner being
at the juncture of relative and Absolute

Seeing grandly now
You navigate by your starlight
and inhabit heaven and earth
simultaneously ascending and descending
you know the lightning of creation
the ladder of becoming

And may you blaze as the sun
for you are dynamic action
for you are restful silence

Subject and object together say
"We are still here!"
but we are One in our Being
and One in our Love

Still here we're walking
turning and stirring
and whirling in the arms of the spiral
reaching and turning from the soft
still center of the spiral

The soft still center
where all is alive

Moving around
the silent center
moving towards
the silent center

Walking the spiral
Into the cosmic vortex
into churning waters of consciousness
into the eternal light within

Diving into the vibrant void

Walking the spiral
turning
and re-turning
Walking the arms of the spiral
Into the void and quiet center

As if dreamcoils returning
to the navel of a god

to rest through eternity
perpetually at peace

And you turn from darkness
to the light
from all noise and glitter
to the still silent center
where all is so alive

The silent center
and still point
round which the spiral turns
round which you turn
around which you are turning

And you are filled with light
and radiating light
you are spinning the grid and the spiral
you are spinning the light

Subject and object
breathing as one
creator and creation
both shining as one

Remaining in place
you are turning
remaining in place
you are soaring
and infinitely falling

Balancing angles and curves
the grid and the spiral
activity and rest
infinity and point

Aligned with the sun and the moon
the planets and the stars
with all the universe aligned
and nature's laws your allies

You're a whirlwind grown calm
in the belly of the Earth

A giant turning spiral
moves its mighty arms
and many tinier spirals are turning
all collected
inter-connected
coherent and awake in infinite correlation
holding together the cosmic weave
of life in joy enjoyed in peace

Knowledge manifest and unmanifest
equally enthroned in glory
and in flow of breath and blood
enthroned in lively consciousness
in thought and speech and action

Infinity converges onto point
point expands into infinity

And you're rooted in Heaven
and rooted in the Earth

Walking the grid
Dancing the spiral

WALTZING INFINITY

In the darkness
A speck

The tiniest speck of light

In the darkness
A tiny point of light

A candle perhaps
To light the darkness?

No, much smaller
Much larger too
And much more charming

Just a speck in the night
But it's intimate as campfire
The tiny light is charming
And like the magic charm it is
It changes colors as you gaze

And it fills you with an unknown longing

Like a star in the night
The light changes colors

One star or two?
One light or three?
Can it be both one and many?

This light has movement
And twinkles like a star

It changes colors

It changes colors
And appears to grow
It grows with your attention
Lovely Pleiades of dancing light
It grows in answer to your question

Your question was your loving gaze
Its answer was its beauty[2]

The light begins to grow
The light begins to swell
The light expands and multiplies

All Heavenly Hosts of light

Light together with a thousand points of light
This light begins to grow

This light is golden
It shines on you its golden light
Your feel the rousing stir of love
There stirs in you great love for the light

You are bathed in light
And filled with a warm
and golden glow
Your solar plexus quivers
A tiny dawn is born

---

[2] A nod to Augustine of Hippo, *The Confessions* (10:6).

You melt and you're awake
Awake as never before

And for the first time
You are truly alive
Alive as never before

Now this light is pink
It shines on you its pink and fleecy light
And sings to you its rosy-colored song
And you feel a surge of precious love

A surging love for all this light

And you are bathed in pinkish light
And love grows stronger
In the loving pink and rosy-colored light

You are engulfed in light
How kindly light it touches you
And as you touch the kindly light
You sense each other's loving touch

And there's a sound like the sound of wind
Like the sound of oceans rolling on the shore

You are engulfed in a great sound
It is complete and all encompassing
And whole like music
And there is a great wind

There is a fragrance

You touch the light
and hear the sound of light

You smell the sweet light
And taste the loving light

And there's light that's blue
And you're awash in blue
You swoon in blue

Awash in blue
You bathe in blue and liquid light
And hear the sound of blue
And taste it
And touch the smell of blue

The blue light pulsates in your vision
In your awareness now the blue light pulses
By turns becoming dark or light
In great sweeping spirals it turns
And stirs you with its penetrating strides

The blue expands
It vibrates and resounds
It is alive inside you

The light expands
You are engulfed in the light
Infused with the light
And the light is many lights and colors
A thousand tiny points of light

The light is many sights and sounds
The light has many tastes

You are engulfed in light
All you can see is the light
And you in turn engulf the light

Light too big to contain
Love too big to embrace

And there's a great wind
And you are swept away by the sound

Swept away by the love
Swept away by the light

Light is all you can see
This Light is all that you are

And you embrace many lights
And you live many loves

And you love the light
The light loves you
The light is your life

You love the light that you are

And you're a troubadour of the light
You love the light of your life
And live the light of your love

You are vast in your love

And you are the Light
You are the Light
You are the Light that you love

ANNA'S HOUSE

Anna Jean has lent me
Her apartment

I'm staying at her house

Anna Jean the Brit
Like a crop circle
Dropped into an Iowa cornfield

Via Australia

I'm in her house
And it's like entering a different world
A jewel box of comforts
So far from the Outback

And Home
House of the Dreamtime
And all the Laws of Nature

I'm living in the Heartland
But feel so light, so airy
It's like I'm at the beach
The glare of light by day
As if it were Burque[3]
Looking over West Mesa

[3] Albuquerque, New Mexico

And thunder o'er the prairie
Buffalo thunder from the heavens
And lightning over the world

At night the ocean waves
The shape of distant whale-calls
Mingling with the rustling corn
The smell of ripening wheat

The glare of light by day
And all throughout the night
Thundering lightning o'er the prairie
Illumination for the soul

By the quiet shroud of night
I stand here in the shadows

The lights inside are off now
I'm ready now for bed

And the light comes in
Seductive, and with stealth
And I note the alluring beauty
The myriad qualities of the light
There's an otherworldly softness to the light
And I draw closer to its mystery

This light is moist, and wet
It's wet like falling rain
And the din of mob cicadas
Like dust is this light, so dry
This light is like an incense
Fragrant is the light

I move all through the house
Facing light like memories
Old photographs of light
Mementos of Cambodia
Venus, Atlantic City . . .
Future light
Light that's old and also new
Light from the mirrored past

This light is active
So lively that it bounces
Light sprinting
From bath and bedrooms
To the kitchen sink
Light that is everywhere
Simultaneous stillness
That is everywhere alive

I stand in the *Brahmasthan*
The meeting place of lights
How magical this space is
Rare configuration of Body
And the Mind, propinquity
Of Light and Being
Nightsounds and architecture

I'm at the switchboard of dimensions
The center of all things
A faceted gem of light and being
Light coming in, light going out
Centered am I
Master of all I survey

Centered
I stand
Magnificent
Am I
Center of the world
Center of the Universe
Light of pure consciousness
Being
Center of the Heart

I stand
in the Brahmasthan
A jewel
Light
All Being

Peace of the body
Luminosity of the mind
Lightning to the horizon and beyond
Shining paths from Delhi to New York
From Cairo to Paris and Peru
Aura Borealis of light

What is this Light?
Where is this Light
Taking me?

Seat of proprioception
From where I see in all directions
All angles are revealed and explained
All distances and reflected spaces
Time and places in between

And no time
        All time

No place
        All places
Eternally here and now

What is this Light?

Centrifugal movement outwards
The spokes are turning and they move
Sunbeams and Moonbeams
As architectures of the Light
Dreamtime Alhambras
Recede into infinity
Resonating bounces of gongs
Gongs . . . gongs . . .

What is this Light?

Where
Is this Light
Taking me?

Light shining in
From the outside

Light streaming out
À la rencontre
Neither inside nor out
Equilibrium and balance

Direct light
Shadow light

Light reflected
and refracted

This light is universal

Intelligence in every molecule
Coherence in every cell
Intelligence is all the eye can see
And all the Seven Seas of light
And phosphorescent bays
From Ponce to Canberra

Spilling light
Flowing light
Ricocheting light of doorframes and windows
Glowing light of the skin
And papered walls
And all-seeing eyes and mirrors
Moonlight of the hearth
Sunlight of the heart
(*What is this light?*)
Starlight of the heavens
Pleiades and Antares
North Star and Bethlehem
Constellations of light
Ultimate luminosity

Light shining from the ancestors
The headlights of their cars
It's the light of the frontal lobes
Glow of pituitary
Light in perpetuity
And headlights here inside
The head

Where is this Light
Taking me?
Where
Am I taking
This Light

So open and free
It's like I'm at the beach
It feels like Paris
Like Rio
And I feel like I'm home
At Ayer's Rock

Home I am in Anna's House
Filled with light in Anna's House
Filled with Anna's House
And the Universal Light of Home

Home:
It's the collapse of Rik
The expansion of Jyoti
This light is Agni
Light of pure consciousness
Consciousness of Brahman

It's the expansion of "A"
And the collapse of "K"
My head is filled with the Light
This light is streaming out my eyes
This light is singing in my head
And throughout the Universe alike
It sings, it sings, and it sings

This light is full of full
This light is every fullness

This light exceeds the boundaries
Of my head, exceeds the boundaries
Of the earth and sky
This excellent light is cosmic
Light of a cosmic universe
and a cosmic mind
And light of pure consciousness
Light of Purest Being

This light is all

It's the collapse of the body
It's the expansion of Jyoti
Pure and purest light
Of the mind and soul

Jo to ba
Jo to ba a

Light
is all that I am
Light
is all that there is

Jo to ba
Jo to ba a

Light everywhere
Everywhere light

Jo to ba
Jo to ba a

Everything
Everywhere
Jo to ba
Jo to ba a

All light

A a a
A a a
A a u
A a u

A a u um
A a u um

M m m
M m m

m